

VZCZCXRO0011
PP RUEHLMC
DE RUEHLP #0413/01 0471743
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161743Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8106
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 5605
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2870
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6742
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 3966
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1314
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1213
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3566
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3951
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8468
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LA PAZ 000413

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA A/S SHANNON AND PDAS SHAPIRO
STATE ALSO FOR WHA/AND
NSC FOR DFISK
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT TO RESIGN

REF: A. LA PAZ 336 B. LA PAZ 409

Classified By: Ambassador David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4d and b.

¶1. (C) Summary: President of the National Electoral Court Oscar Hassenteufel told Poloff February 15 he was concerned about the government's seeming intention to control even autonomous Bolivian institutions -- and in particular to purge the Electoral Court and dominate the Constituent Assembly process. He acknowledged he planned to step down soon, but mostly because reductions to his salary were such that it made no sense for him financially to continue working. Going against the prevailing analysis, Hassenteufel speculated that the MAS would not fare as well in the election of assembly representatives as it did on December 18. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On February 15, Poloff met with President of the National Electoral Court Oscar Hassenteufel (protect) to get his views on the continued public pressure by MAS officials and deputies for Electoral Court leaders to step down. (According to February 14 press reports, MAS deputy Gustavo Torrico again accused electoral court officials of having fraudulently purged likely MAS voters from electoral rolls prior to the December 18 elections. Echoing what they have told us in the past, court officials have responded that the purging of voter lists was done in a politically neutral process that began well before early general elections had even appeared on the agenda. Many observers believe the MAS accusations are transparently political and without substance. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Hassenteufel was plainly concerned by the MAS-led government's actions and intentions. Pointing to the recent resignation of the head of the national road service, Jose Bakovic (after a barrage of so far unsupported corruption allegations levied against him by government officials, including President Morales), Hassenteufel said the government's top priority seemed to be to gain control of the range of Bolivian institutions, including those that were supposed to be autonomous. In this connection, he noted that early speculation regarding the government's likely undemocratic intentions was being borne out by the facts.

14. (C) With respect to government-led attacks against the integrity of the electoral court, Hassenteufel told us that these appeared to reflect a strategy to purge the current court leadership and make way for pro-government replacements. Such a situation, he averred, would give the government direct control over the institution that would shape the Constituent Assembly -- and therefore the ability to more fully control the assembly process (and result) itself. He agreed that the government had appeared to subordinate all its other objectives, including day-to-day governing, to that of gaining control over the Constituent Assembly (ref A). Asked about reported Venezuelan plans to help the Bolivian government provide official identity documents to the hundreds of thousands of Bolivians who lack them and who are therefore unable to vote (ref B), Hassenteufel said that approximately 250,000 Bolivians of voting age were in that situation, and one would have reason to worry should the Venezuelan-led program formalize the voting status of significantly more people than that.

15. (C) In response to a question about whether court representatives would depart in the face of government pressure, Hassenteufel said he planned to step down soon, but that financial considerations rather than political pressures were paramount in shaping his personal decision. He explained that the cuts in his salary as a result of the government's planned austerity measures were such that continuing to work would no longer make sense, and could even cost him money -- given that pensions were based on a percentage of one's terminal salary. Hassenteufel understood that others would have to make judgments based on their particular circumstances.

LA PAZ 00000413 002 OF 002

16. (C) Comment: Hassenteufel was less worried than most observers about the MAS's prospects in the election of Constituent Assembly representatives. (Many point to the government's 75% approval ratings as evidence that it would win big were elections held today.) He speculated that, particularly if Bolivia's political opposition found a way to unite against the common rival, the MAS would not fare as well in the assembly vote as it did on December 18. Hassenteufel's decision to step down (not yet made public), taken together with the earlier announcement of Supreme Court President Eduardo Rodriguez to leave his office March 1, will leave two of Bolivia's four branches of government with vacancies at the top. End Comment.
GREENLEE